

The Deaf Way: Creating a world community

The Deaf Way Conference and Festival has come and gone. The Gallaudet campus is quiet now—the International Deaf Club tent has been taken down; there are no lines of people waiting for the buses to carry them from Olmsted Green to the Omni Shoreham Hotel; exhibits have been dismantled; and no longer do we see faces from many cultures, the varied signs of people from all over the world.

But The Deaf Way is not finished. It lives on in the hearts and minds of the more than 5,000 people who attended the history-making event July 10 through 14. And its effect has the potential to change the lives of deaf people around the globe.

"What happens this week will send waves all over the world," said Mervin Garretson, chairman of The Deaf Way, at the opening ceremony at the Omni Shoreham on July 10. "No one ever knows what kind of fire is kindled by rubbing minds together."

Gallaudet President King Jordan, in his opening address, called the week "a touchstone—a place that deaf people will look back on and use as a standard of comparison." Said Jordan, "We are building signposts to mark where we are today and the distance we have come. We are building signposts as points of reference for where we are going as a world community of deaf and hard of hearing people."

During The Deaf Way Conference and Festival, people from more than 75 countries had the opportunity to attend meetings at the Omni Shoreham Hotel and performances on Kendall Green that included more than 500 papers and artistic events. More than 100 exhibits at the hotel displayed information about various organizations, support services, and new technologies. Art work, TV and video shows, crafts, and other exhibits were scattered throughout Kendall Green. And, in addition to a schedule jam-packed with activities from early morning to far into the evening, participants also found the time to re-connect with old friends, make new ones, and communicate with people from different countries.

Providing communication access for conference participants was a major challenge. More than 225 sign language interpreters were present at the Omni to provide translation in American Sign Language and International Sign. Another 50 interpreters provided voice translation in Spanish, French, and English. Rooms where the largest conferences were held included large screens where participants could view the speaker, real-time captioning in English, and ASL and International Sign interpreters.

In addition, satellite coverage carried highlights of the week to Europe and



Deaf performing artists celebrate the opening of The Deaf Way at a special performance July 9 in Lisner Auditorium. In foreground are Phyllis Frelich, Bernard Bragg, and Howie Seago.

Scandinavia every day of the event, and specials were aired, via satellite, in South America, Central America, parts of Canada, and at all of Gallaudet's regional centers.

The conference itself focused on four areas: deaf culture, history, sign language, and arts. Each area included two major plenary sessions, daily symposia, and many smaller presentations.

Culture

Deaf culture was not only one of the thematic areas of The Deaf Way Conference, discussed during the week at the Omni Shoreham Hotel. It was also in evidence throughout the Gallaudet campus—in the stories told by deaf people about their lives; in the plays, dances, and art by deaf presenters from many countries; in the lively interactions taking place in the International Deaf Club tent; and in all the places where people from different countries came together.

The conference did provide an overview of deaf culture, however, as presenters described deaf culture and how it is reflected in the language, humor, and lifestyles of deaf people.

According to plenary speaker Paddy Ladd, co-founder of the National Union of the Deaf in London, "culture means the way of life of a group of people—their language, their way of looking at the world, their beliefs, the things they create, the stories they tell." Deaf culture can be seen in the sign languages used by deaf people around the world; in new art forms such as signed poetry, sign song, and deaf theater; in the clubs, schools, associations, sports, and political structures developed by deaf people.

"In the view of most hearing cultures, deafness means that something is

missing," said Ladd. But deaf people are different because of language and culture. "If we could hear tomorrow, we wouldn't become hearing people," said Ladd, "because inside we are deaf. Our minds are deaf. This has come from seeing the world in a different way."

Deaf humor is a large part of deaf culture, as presenters in another plenary session pointed out. Guy Bouchaveau of France demonstrated visual humor through stories and descriptions. America's M.J. Bienvenu focused on four categories of deaf humor: visual humor, funny situations resulting from not being able to hear, American Sign Language, and oppression.

Other presenters discussed areas including political action, legal issues, advocacy, interactions between deaf and hearing people, deaf professionals and parents, mainstreaming, and various subcultures within the deaf culture.

In numerous small sessions during the week, people from many countries described the lives of deaf people. Thailand, said Kampil Suwanarat, general manager of the National Association of the Deaf there, has long been known as the "land of smiles." "But Thai deaf people are different," he said. "We don't smile as much. We haven't been given the opportunity. We haven't received an education." Few deaf Thais can read or write, he said, and there is little support for deaf children.

Anwar Shamshudin painted an even more dismal picture of the lives of deaf people in Pakistan. Nearly 80 percent of Pakistanis live in villages, where schools often do not exist for hearing children, much less deaf ones. "Deaf children are considered taboo. Parents tend to hide the deaf child," he said.

Japan's Michiko Tsuchiya spoke of

the division between older deaf people who know sign language and read and write Japanese well, and younger deaf people who receive an oral education. "This separation of the deaf community is very painful," she said.

In Nepal, which has about half a million deaf people, there are now four deaf schools, said Raghav Bir Joshi. But there is only one deaf teacher, and education is difficult because deaf people are scattered throughout this mountainous country.

Alberto Paliza Farfan of Peru described the deaf community in the ancient Incan city of Cusco, where the Incan culture was absorbed by Spain until 1985. Deaf people could not marry, drive, or take communion at Catholic services. Priests ran the schools and refused to teach sign language.

Today, things are changing, and sign language interpreters are available in the schools. But problems still exist, he said, because of the many different sign languages throughout the country.

Education for deaf students in some countries is becoming more progressive. Dr. Zaid Abdullah Al-Moslat, director of special education in Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Education, noted that the first school for deaf students in his country opened in 1964. Today, "the handicapped, like anyone else, are part of our society," he said, and free education, based on the Islamic religion, is provided by the state.

After 30 years of oral education for deaf children, Venezuela in 1985 began to implement bilingual education, with Spanish taught as a second language. Carlos Sanchez noted that they considered the option of Total Com-

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Deaf Way participants prepare to board the bus from Kendall Green to the Omni Shoreham Hotel.

Countries share deaf culture

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munication "but that did not go any farther than oralism translated into sign. We chose, instead, respect for Venezuelan Sign Language."

Ladd stressed the importance of each country developing its own sign language. "Our chances of building a genuine world culture are growing," he said. "But we must beware of making the same mistake as hearing people and imposing the language and culture of one country on another. Each country's sign language must be developed from within."

Language

Researchers, educators, deaf people, and parents of deaf children from Africa to the Netherlands addressed the intricacies of language at 33 conference sessions during The Deaf Way. Topics ranged from how children acquire language, bilingual approaches to teaching deaf children, how to develop dictionaries of natural sign languages, and the grammatical structures of various sign languages.

Bilingual education for deaf children was a major focus of a number of presentations. One language plenary concentrated on the Swedish National Organization of the Deaf's victory in 1981 when the Swedish government recognized Swedish Sign Language as an official language. At the University of Stockholm today, "sign language is established as an academic subject of its own," said Dr. Brita Bergmann, a faculty member in the Department of Sign Language at the university's Linguistics Institute. Deaf students can earn a doctoral degree in sign language through courses taught in Swedish Sign Language.

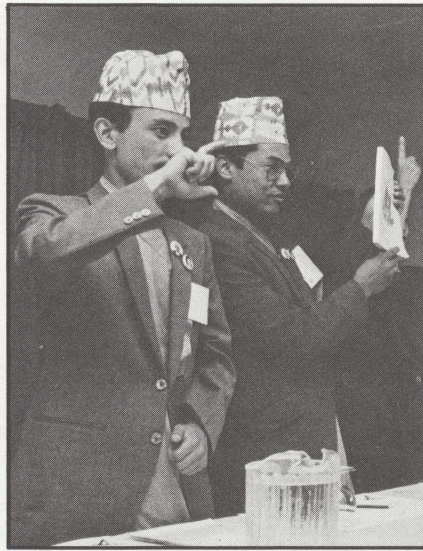
Lars Wallin, the first deaf doctoral candidate in the program, said the success of the deaf community's fight for its language stems from sign language research, the Swedish National Organization of the Deaf, and the deaf community's cooperation with parent and other organizations.

In a symposium on bilingual education for deaf children, Britta Hansen, director of the Center of Total Communication in Copenhagen, Denmark, said that various studies conducted by the center revealed that the simultaneous method [using signs and spoken Danish simultaneously] was not giving deaf children a visual version of Danish. "Instead . . . they quite often understood neither the signs nor the spoken words" and tended to become "half lingual," she said.

Hansen described a model program in which—at the urging of hearing and deaf parents—deaf children are taught all subjects in Danish Sign Language (DSL). "Whereas 10 to 15 percent of deaf children used to learn to read for meaning, we now see 55 percent of them being able to do this," she said. Since that first group, the bilingual approach has been accepted by the Ministry of Education, schools for deaf students, and parents—many of whom start learning DSL when their child is diagnosed as deaf.

Hansen was joined by Jean-Francois Mercurio, a deaf researcher and teacher at the Research Center for Bilingual Classes in Portiers, France, and Myriam de Lujan from the Center for Infant Development in Merida, Venezuela. They also presented bilingual models that use the deaf commu-

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Deaf presenters from Nepal discuss deaf culture in their country.

nity's natural sign language to educate deaf children.

A second language plenary on sign language and education featured Serena Corazza, a child of deaf parents and sign language researcher from Trieste, Italy; and Sam Supalla, a deaf doctoral student and research assistant at the University of Illinois. Supalla echoed the bilingual theme in his presentation as he analyzed the Education of the Handicapped Act (P.L. 94-142) and the Bilingual Education Acts of 1968 and 1974 and found that neither adequately addresses the linguistic needs of deaf children. An ideal bilingual education for deaf children would guarantee them the right to ASL both at home and in school, said Supalla.

Arts

For the hundreds of artists who gathered for The Deaf Way—including actors, poets, painters, architects, mimes, writers, television and film producers, illustrators, dancers, storytellers, graphic and interior designers, art educators, cartoonists, and photographers—all the world was a stage for one week, and everyone was a star.

While evening festival performances showcased the talents of performers from around the world, daytime sessions provided a forum for those in the arts to present their views on myriad topics of interest to the deaf community. Conference attendees learned about problems faced by deaf actors in the Soviet Union; the use of poetry in classrooms for American deaf students; a project in France to open cultural events to deaf people and promote deaf artists; and the use of pantomime and psychotherapy with deaf people in Czechoslovakia.

Many presentations focused on the need to develop equal opportunities for deaf people in the arts and to eliminate discrimination. A panel discussion on deaf people in the entertainment industry in the United States was so well attended that it was extended to a second session two days later.

"My goal is to have opportunities in theater for deaf people the same as for other minorities," said panel moderator and Tony award-winning actress Phyllis Frelich. "We are a cultural minority. We feel we are different by language, not by a physical disability."

In a plenary presentation about deaf culture in the media and the arts, Doug Alker, director of community services for the Royal National Institute for the Deaf in London, called on the deaf community to work together to "get our own house in order." Said Alker,

"Let us be aware of what constitutes our culture and wear it with pride. Then, in dealing with the problem of the media's misconceptions of deaf culture we all would be able to move with unity, strength, and conviction."

Many of the speakers emphasized the importance of encouraging participation in the arts among deaf children—including storytelling, art, and drama—as a means of preserving and enriching deaf heritage.

The week provided an opportunity for international professional actors to meet and interact with each other in a special workshop, and for deaf architects, interior designers, and architectural draftspeople to learn about the activities of the Hearing Impaired Architectural Network.

The Deaf Way also brought to campus the works of two deaf artists who were commissioned to create pieces for the event. Sculptor Guy Wonder created a four-part work with Gallaudet students during the month of June. It now stands outside the dining hall plaza.

Chuck Baird, who has worked as an actor, set designer, and painter with the National Theatre of the Deaf for almost nine years, was commissioned to create a mural for The Deaf Way. His finished work, which he executed with students from MSSD, is on the wall in the Gallaudet cafeteria.



Guy Wonder created this sculpture for Deaf Way, with the help of Gallaudet students.

History

Deaf people proved during the Deaf President Now movement at Gallaudet last year that they can "do anything except hear," but they are a long way from being able to rest on their laurels.

That was the repeated message of renowned deaf rights activists who spoke at various sessions related to history and advocacy during the week.

Leaders such as Hurst Hannum, lawyer and associate professor at Tufts University; Dr. Harlan Lane, author, lecturer, and psychology professor; Dr. Mary Malzkahn, assistant professor of Government at Gallaudet; Liisa Kauppinen, general secretary of the World Federation of the Deaf; and DPN student leaders Bridgetta Bourne, Greg Hlibok, and Jerry Covell, urged Deaf Way participants to carry home the inspiration gained during the week and work to reverse discrimination.

Lecturers cited countless examples of injustices against deaf people still practiced in many parts of the world:

- The birth of a deaf child is considered God's punishment for sin in some South and Central American countries. Many parents abandon deaf infants on the streets.

- There are 70 million deaf people in the world, yet only a fraction of them are receiving education.

- In most countries, deaf people are discouraged from using their native sign languages.

- In many Third World countries, deaf people are forbidden from marrying.

- Deaf people cannot obtain driver's licenses in many parts of the world.

- The career opportunities for most deaf people is bleak, and the chance for advancement is practically nil. At best, deaf people in most parts of the world are limited to doing work requiring skills with the hands, not the mind.

"What about the deaf people in your country?" Malzkahn asked the crowd.

"What level do they live on?"

"American deaf people have spoken out [against discrimination]," Malzkahn continued. "It is time that deaf people in other countries did the same thing."

The phrase 'deaf people can do anything' needs elaboration, said Hannum. "It requires a willingness to act. The assertion of rights and demands for political and economic power requires activism."

Another way for the world to work toward providing equal rights for deaf people, said Lane, is by making the world aware of deaf culture and deaf people's needs by studying deaf history.

Deaf people "must know their history if they are to draw up an agenda for reform," said Lane.

In a panel discussion about DPN, Gallaudet Student Body Government President Greg Hlibok echoed Lane's comments about history: "I don't mean to dwell on the past, but it's a tool we can use for the future."

Hlibok told the deaf people in the audience that when they went back home they should remember "the three Rs—recognition, respect, and responsibility. You need to share that responsibility in order to control your destiny."

Student leader Bridgetta Bourne encouraged deaf people to be assertive, a trait that she said is lacking among deaf people in other parts of the world. She described a visit to England, where a deaf Londoner told her, "In America, deaf people are encouraged to speak up. I wish we were."

"You can," Bourne told The Deaf Way audience. "We proved that if you do, you will get your way. . . . If you are inspired from what you learned, take it home. We [in America] will support you."

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GREEN

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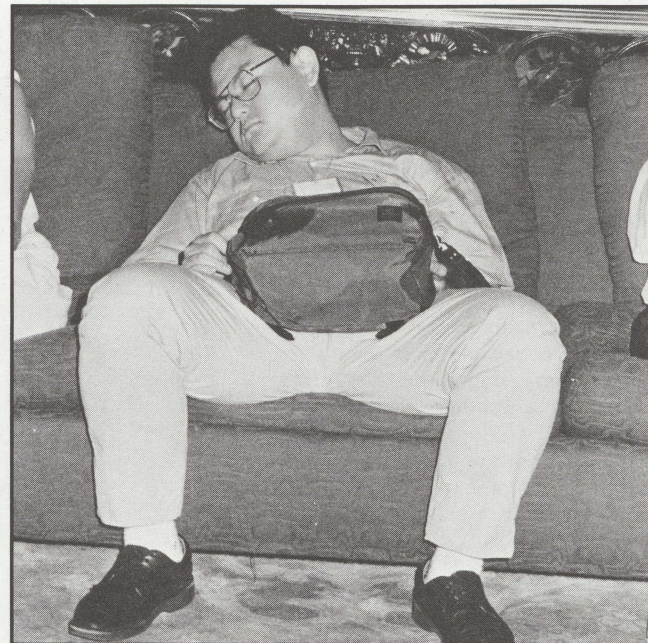
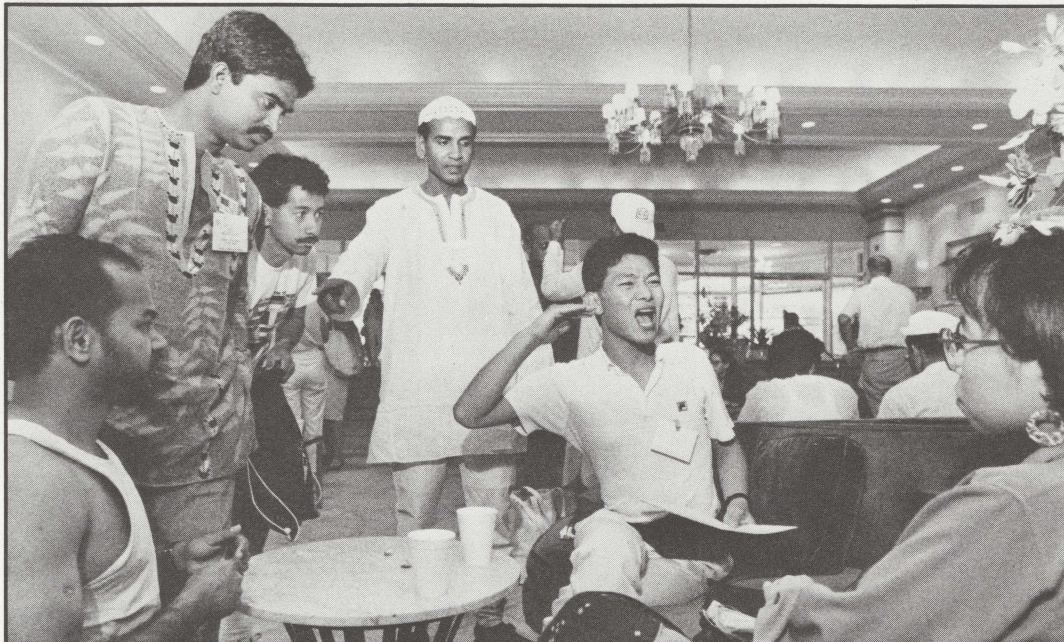
William Robertson



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July 24, 1989

Deaf Way highlights



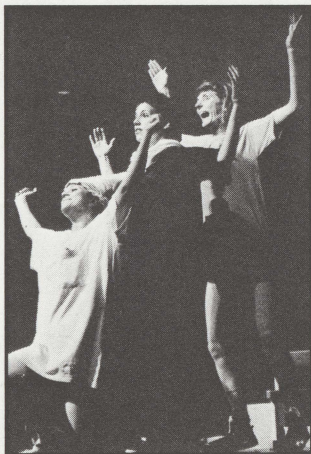
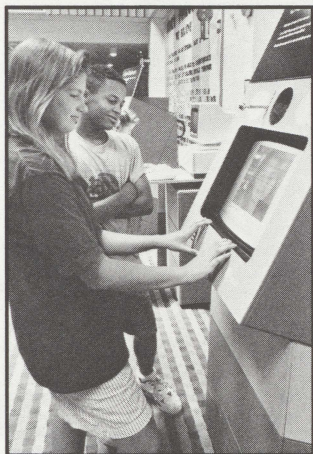
(LEFT) The Deaf Way provides a forum for sharing ideas as participants gather in the Omni Shoreham lobby. (ABOVE) An exhausted conference-goer takes a break between sessions.



Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) addresses the opening session of The Deaf Way. Sharing the stage are (from left) Gallaudet President King Jordan; Liisa Kauppinen, general secretary of the World Federation of the Deaf; Dr. Mervin Garretson, Deaf Way Chairman; Dr. Yerker Andersson, president of the WFD; and (to right of podium) Mamadou Barry of the United Nations.



A craftsman from Venezuela displays his work.



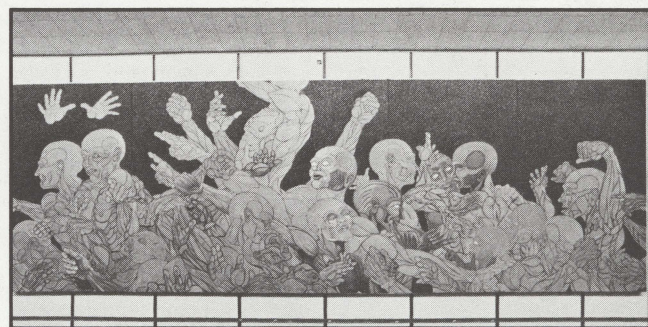
(LEFT) Young Deaf Way participants in the KDES lobby play with a face-changing machine provided by AT&T, a major Deaf Way sponsor. (RIGHT) Actress and former MSSD student Terrylene Theriot (center) and other Los Angeles Children's Theatre members perform "Invisible Glass," a play by Terrylene.



(ABOVE) The "Kyogen," a traditional Japanese ritual narrator, performs in a Japanese Theatre of the Deaf production. (RIGHT) Artist Chuck Baird created this mural for The Deaf Way.



The audience in the Regency Ballroom watches a lecture on human rights by Dr. Mary Malzkahn on large screens that provide ASL, English captions, and International Sign.



Folk dancers from Turkey talk with other Deaf Way participants outside the International Deaf Club tent.

Festival reflects heart of deaf community

Throughout the week of The Deaf Way, as participants attended a wide array of festival performances and activities, a common theme was echoed by deaf people from around the world: The festival is at the heart of the culture and communication of deaf communities everywhere.

Hundreds of performers and artists shared that heart as they participated in a creative extravaganza of theater, mime, poetry, dance, painting, crafts, storytelling, and other creative endeavors.

For many of the performers, it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and they made the most of it.

Night after night, these artists captivated audiences until the last curtain or door closed. And exhibits of original paintings, photography, ceramics, and many other arts and crafts renewed the interests of even the most tuckered-out conference goers.

During the week, performances were held by theater groups from many countries, including the United States, France, Japan, Spain, Italy, China, Japan, Finland, Greece, the U.S.S.R., Israel, Norway, India, Belgium, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, and the Philippines.

As world-renowned deaf mime Miko Machalski from Poland said, "Deaf people are particularly suited for



The Deaf Actors Group from Russia's Schukin Theater performs "George Dandin" by Moliere.

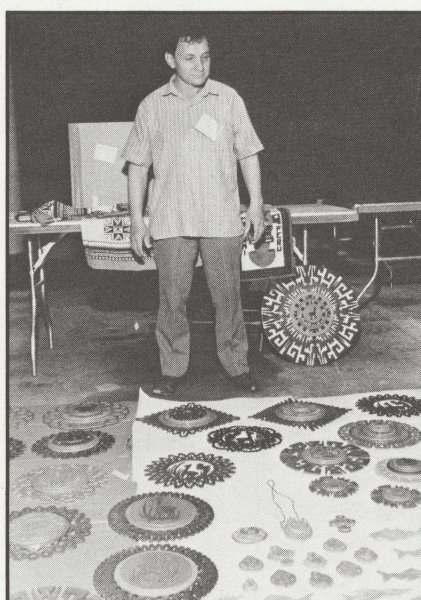
theatrics because of sign language and movement. Movement supports all kinds of roles."

Among countries that accepted sign language late, some deaf theatrical companies gave up, said Machalski. They had mastered sign language but did not learn to integrate movement. By contrast, he said deaf actors in the Soviet Union started with sign language, learned to integrate movement, and greatly improved.

Machalski's mention of the Soviet Union actors as "greatly improved" was well supported by a lively, professional rendering of Moliere's comedy "George Dandin" by the recently-established Deaf Actors Group from the Schukin Theater College in Moscow, the oldest and most respected acting school in that country.

According to director Andre Mekke, "every day brings new learning for us—touching new cultures. We think that theater education is very helpful in developing deaf people. [The festival] seems to me to be a great opportunity to help develop their culture."

Deaf actor Maxim Niyazov added, "It is my dream to build a theatrical bridge between the United States and the



A Peruvian craftsman displays his work at the international arts and crafts market.

Soviet Union." Both, he said, have many good things to offer.

The U.S.A.'s own National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD) performed its nationwide tour hit "King of Hearts," adapted from the film by Philippe de Broca. The play shows a lighter side of World War I in which a Scottish soldier mistakes the inmates of a French insane asylum for a group of ordinary villagers, presenting a comic plot paralleling the serious insanity of war.

"King of Hearts" featured some of America's most famous deaf actors: Chuck Baird, Adrian Blue, Elena Blue, Sandi Inches, and Andy Vassnick. Later the NTD cast joined Japan's Theatre of the Deaf for a performance of "In a Grove," a stark and powerful tale of murder and intrigue.

The performances inspired deaf participants from around the world. "There are not very many opportunities for deaf actors in Holland, but we are making progress," said Jean Couprie, who works for Amsterdam's cable television and is Holland's only deaf drama director. Couprie works with "Hand-theater," a group of six young deaf performers. "We will go home with some new ideas," he said.

Couprie works with children whom he hopes "will grow up and become professional actors—it's like planting seeds that will grow." Toward this goal, he is planning a report on The Deaf Way to the Netherlands Ministry of Culture.

Arts and crafts from throughout the world were also in evidence at the fes-

tival. Works by many different artists were displayed and sold at an international open market in the KDES parking plaza.

From Mexico, artist Arturo Sanchez brought a collection of his paintings that reflect his concern for life and ecology. "All of my ideas are original, created from my imagination and my heart," he said.

"Seeing Gallaudet really opened my eyes," said Sanchez. In Mexico, deaf people are low on the educational and economic levels, he said. "Here the deaf people are higher up. There is love and friendliness among deaf people here."

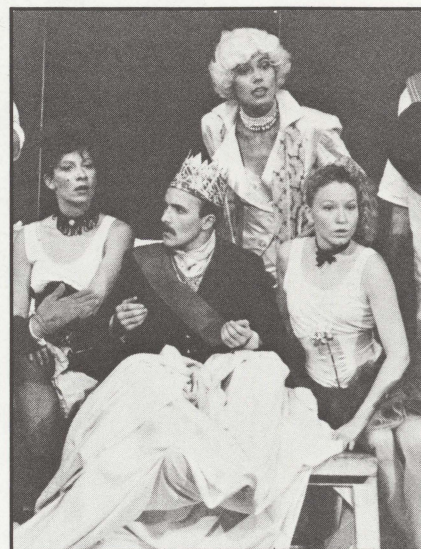
Also occupying the arts and crafts area at Kendall were Albert and Thomasa Paliza from Peru, whose woven tapestries depicted ancient Incan designs and village scenes. They also made pottery, figurines, and macrame. "Coming here makes me feel proud," said Albert Paliza. "I will go back to Peru and tell deaf artists to work more and be more enthusiastic about their art and culture."

Nearby at the International Deaf Club of tent—never without an evening crowd—dancers, storytellers, mimes, poets, and other portrayals of deaf culture entertained throughout the evening. Outside the tent, people lined up for Italian, Mexican, and Chinese fare, and American hot dogs and burgers.

On the evening of July 13, an audience filled the tent to overflowing to watch native-costumed dancers from all around the world. Two of the most captivating were the dancers from Bulgaria and Turkey. The former, in bright red and white costumes, performed some of the most precise and intricate steps, while the Turkish group danced superbly, the women in bright floral print skirts and the men in elaborate uniforms of muted colors.

Collectively, The Deaf Way participants expressed pleasure in associating with deaf people of other countries and talked of the need for more such festivals. As for this event, participants felt that the appointment of Gallaudet's first deaf president, Dr. I. King Jordan, and the publicity generated by the 1988 Deaf President Now movement, made Gallaudet an appropriate setting for this history-making festival and conference.

Roberto Wirth, general manager of the Hassler Hotel in Rome, echoed a common opinion: "This was the right time and the right place."



The National Theatre of the Deaf performs "King of Hearts" during the festival.

Announcements

The Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) open season ends this week. Employees hired on or before Dec. 31, 1988, who wish to begin or change their TSP deductions must submit their forms to the Personnel Office by 4:30 p.m. on Monday, July 31. For more information and forms, contact Elaine Vance at College Hall, Room 13B or 7, or x5111.

An exhibit and sale of Thomas Mayes photographs is being held July 17-28 at the Sovran Bank/D.C. National, 4400 Connecticut Ave. NW, Monday-Friday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. and Friday also from 4-5:30 p.m. Proceeds from the sale will benefit the National Health Care Foundation for the Deaf Inc. Parking is available. For more information, call Carole Schauer, Executive Director, NHCDF, 832-6681 (V/TDD).

Classified Ads

CLASSIFIED ADS are printed free as a service to Gallaudet faculty and staff. They must be submitted in writing only to *On the Green*, MSSD, Room G-37. Ads may be run for a maximum of two weeks, if requested and if space permits. The deadline for submitting advertisements is Friday, 10 days before the desired publication. Ads received by Friday, Aug. 4, will appear in the Aug. 14 issue. There will be no issue Aug. 7.

FREE: Moving boxes in various sizes, sturdy, clean, good cond., approx. 40. Call Joan, x5223 (V), x5226 (TDD) or 864-2054 (V).

FOR SALE: Window fan, like new, \$70; Mickey Mouse picture, new, \$10; 2 window ACs, 1 for \$80, 1 for \$75; 8'x10' beige carpet remnant, good cond., \$75; 12'x15' plum room-sized carpet, good cond., \$125; moving, must sell. Call Simone, x5090.

WANTED: Grad. student or faculty/staff to share large house w/faculty member and doctoral student, easy walk to Gallaudet, \$220/mos. plus 1/3 util. Call x5080.

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Deaf folk dancers from Bulgaria are one of many groups from around the world that performed at International Dance Night, held in the International Deaf Club tent.